

November 18, 2016

Public Works and Infrastructure Committee

Re: Road Safety for School Children (PW17.13)

Dear Chair Jaye Robinson and Members of the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee,

I'm the Director of the Toronto Centre for Active Transportation (TCAT), a project of the registered charity Clean Air Partnership. TCAT's mission is to advance knowledge and evidence to build support for safe and inclusive streets for walking and cycling.

On behalf of TCAT, I would like to comment on the topic of Road Safety for School Children. Specifically I would like to tell you about the Guide to Safer Streets Near Schools, to request your support for the guide, and to accelerate safety measures to protect our most vulnerable road users.

The development of the Guide to Safer Streets Near Schools was led by Green Communities Canada in partnership with TCAT, University of Toronto, Toronto Public Health, Toronto District School Board, and CultureLink Settlement & Community Services. This new resource is an easy to follow guide to traffic safety policies in Toronto. It covers three overarching areas of traffic safety: speed limit measures, traffic calming measures, as well as intersection and major road crossing measures. Steps to follow are presented in simple language, and accompanied by photos, samples, and editable templates for download from the website saferstreetsnearschools.ca

The purpose of the guide is to empower residents, especially school communities, to work with the City of Toronto to improve streets for children and people of all ages to safely walk and wheel for transportation and recreation. Many parents and residents want to make changes in their neighbourhood, but have difficulty finding and understanding the relevant policies and processes available in Toronto. The guide came about in response to an identified need by parents who feel the streets around schools are unsafe and who want to make change but don't know where to begin.

While the focus is on policies, we fully recognize this is only one piece of the puzzle. The guide complements and links to the newly released City of Toronto Road Safety Plan.

The development of the guide involved a literature review of traffic calming and speed limits, a review of relevant city and provincial policies, interviews with a wide range of stakeholders including Transportation Services, and pilot testing with 3 school councils.

The guide is timely. On Friday Nov 18, 2016, Metro News reported that there have been 26 children struck by cars in Toronto in less than 6 months. That is a child every week. Data from Toronto police shows that children seriously injured while heading to and from school is on the rise. And children are more likely to be seriously injured when hit. 27% of crashes involving children result in serious injuries, compared to 14% of all collisions.



A Project of Clean Air Partnership

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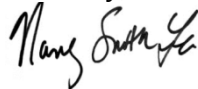
We recognize that the Safer Streets Near Schools guide in no way in and of itself can fix this very serious problem, but we saw a gap in terms of parents having trouble accessing the information they need and felt we could make a contribution by developing it.

We have distributed the guide widely through our partners and networks and TDSB is circulating it to all of its EcoSchools. We have printed 100 copies of the guide and a French translation of the guide is in process. We hope that through widespread distribution of the resource that we can expedite the process to improve the safety of Toronto children walking and cycling to school.

We would ask that you consider helping to disseminate the guide and to promote it including linking to it directly on the City's website. We would also ask that you consider accelerating the aspects of the Road Safety Plan related to speed as we know that this is a contributing factor in all road fatalities. In the 2015 Toronto Public Health report "Pedestrian and Cycling Safety in Toronto" they showed that there were zero pedestrian collisions on roads where the posted speed limit was 30 km/hour. In order to actually achieve zero fatalities we need a more widespread city approach to reducing speed limits to protect our most vulnerable road users.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nancy Smith Lea". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Nancy Smith Lea, Director
Toronto Centre for Active Transportation,